

Auburn — Dreams, Discovery and Design

By Jessica Kline

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY Cayuga County Office of Tourism

Geographically, Auburn is located in the heart of one of the most spectacular landscapes in the United States. Owasco Lake at the city's outskirts is closely flanked on either side by nearly a dozen other lakes, which make up the Finger Lakes Region. Summer sporting opportunities in the area include golfing, boating, swimming and fishing. Since Auburn's resources have continued to lure people from various origins, every season is filled with celebrations of Auburn's diverse residents.

Native American Legacy

The Indians of the Iroquois Confederacy were the first recorded peoples to occupy this bountiful region. Later, American Revolutionary War veterans received land grants in lieu of cash payment, and by the early 1800s, the woodlands in and around Auburn were transformed into productive farms. Water resources, such as the city's Owasco River, ushered in the industrial age and fueled Auburn's prosperity.

History

Auburn is a community rich in culture and history. As the seat of government for Cayuga County, social leaders, inventors, reformers and captains of industry alike built their impressive residences along Auburn's main thoroughfares. Visitors enjoy the hustle and bustle of a busy town and the beauty and attractiveness of a rural city



Holiday musical performance at the Seward House

surrounded by open countryside. Both Auburn and Cayuga County recently celebrated their bicentennials.

Preservation

In 1996, Auburn enjoyed national publicity as part of C-SPAN's coast-to-coast tour tracing the steps of French scholar Alexis de Tocqueville; and in 1998 Auburn proudly hosted Hillary Rodham Clinton on her "Save America's Treasures" campaign. Due to Auburn's active preservation of its historic sites, the city has local, state and national Historic Districts, and is now coined a National White House Millennium Community. The many civic, cultural and historical groups represent an on-

going effort to maintain pride in Auburn's historic past and commitment to its bright future.

THE SEWARD HOUSE

For nearly half a century, the Seward House was home to William Henry Seward, New York Governor, United States Senator and Secretary of State in the cabinets of Presidents Lincoln and Johnson. In 1867, Seward negotiated the purchase of Alaska from Russia. At the time, skeptics called it "Seward's Folly," yet it has since proved one of the United States best investments.

The Seward House has an enviable, intact collection of original items used by the Seward family. China, clothing, family portraits and diaries all serve as a visual diary of Seward's experiences while based in Auburn. Visitors are led through 17 Victorian-appointed rooms, each arranged with original furnishings and preserved as if the Seward family was about to return and host one of their famous dinner gatherings.

Seward loved to read, write letters and collect books. His house boasts one of the most extensive Civil War libraries in the nation. Beyond the house, stroll through the newly reconstructed Victorian gardens, laid out utilizing the diaries of Frances Seward and her husband. The Seward House encourages visitors to step back in time. The Seward House has been a

Registered National Historic Landmark since 1964.

- *Location:* 33 South Street in Auburn
- *Telephone:* 315-252-1283
- *Website:* www.sewardhouse.org

• *Regular Hours:*

Tuesday - Saturday 1PM - 4PM

• *Summer Hours:*

Tuesday - Saturday 10AM - 4PM

Sunday 1PM - 4PM

- *Winter Hours:* Closed in January

THE TIFFANY TREASURE OF THE WORLD!

Louis Comfort Tiffany experts and appraisers agree that the Willard Memorial Chapel is an extremely rare example of Tiffany's work. Tiffany is well known for the beautiful ornamental lamp and stained glass windows, which have become synonymous

nine-paneled Rose window, nine Mooresque-styled chandeliers, a large memorial mosaic bronze and gilt tablet, hand-carved furnishings of oak inlay, a ceiling with gold leaf stencils and extensive mosaic flooring. Musical performances are played on the Chapel's historic Steere-Turner tracker style organ.

In 1990, the Community Preservation Committee acquired the Willard Memorial Chapel and attached Welch Building. Efforts to preserve and restore the Chapel complex continue. It is both a treasure and jewel, as the only complete chapel interior known to exist featuring a totally religious Louis Comfort Tiffany design.

The Willard Memorial Chapel is available for weddings and other celebrations. Surrounding gardens recently donated by the Women's Republican Club ensure quality outdoor backdrops

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The interior of the Willard Memorial Chapel during a musical performance.

with his name. Tiffany was also accomplished in many other areas of artistry and design including painting, art glass, mosaics, furniture, silver, jewelry, pottery and interior design. The Willard Memorial Chapel is an unparalleled example of Tiffany's work in these various mediums.

The Chapel interior showcases fourteen opalescent nave windows, a

for photographs. The Willard Memorial Chapel is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- *Location:* 17 Nelson Street, Auburn
- *Telephone:* 315-252-0339
- *Website:* willardchapel@cayuganet.org

• *Regular Hours:*

Tuesday - Friday 10AM - 4PM

- *Summer Hours:*
Also open Sunday 1PM - 4PM

CASE RESEARCH LAB

The Birthplace of Talking Films.

The Case Research Lab is the site where Theodore Case and Earl Sponable invented the first commercially successful system of sound film in 1923. This invention made history as the Movietone sound system of Fox Films, now Twentieth Century Fox, and Fox Case Movietone News.

In 1926, William Fox purchased the patents from the Lab, making Fox Films the first major motion picture studio to record sound film. The Fox Case Company was formed and all Fox sound productions were given the name Movietone with the slogan, "It Speaks for Itself." The inventions of the Case Research Lab set the standards for all sound production to this day.

The Case Research Lab, a newly restored site located adjacent to the Cayuga Museum, has been open to the

public since 1994. Exhibits in the Lab include the working spaces of the dark-room, chemistry lab, the first sound camera and projector, an infrared signaling system, experimental recording equipment and a 1928 Movietone News recorded image.

The Case Research Lab is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- *Location:* At the Cayuga Museum, 203 Genesee Street, Auburn
- *Telephone:* 315 253-8051
- *Website:* www.cayuganet.org/cayugamuseum

- *Regular Hours:*
Tuesday - Sunday Noon - 5PM
- *Winter Hours:*
Closed in January

Group tours are available by appointment. The Library, Lab and offices are handicapped accessible.

The Cayuga Museum occupies the Willard/Case mansion and estate, built

in 1836. The Museum is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the history of Auburn and Cayuga County through changing exhibits, lectures and special events.

AUBURN SCHINE THEATER

Preserving John Ebersson's Whimsical Theater Design and Decor

The Auburn Schine Theater has a proud role in the history of America's golden age of movie exhibition. It was part of the Schine Theater Chain, the country's largest independent circuit of the era. Schine inspired noted theater architect John Ebersson to create something unrivaled and spectacular in Auburn. Schine's wish was granted on September 15, 1938, when a wholly unique outer space wonderland was unveiled to an enthralled audience.

The decor was low and sleek, accented with scads of chrome, making abundant use of vivid color in running bands and stripes. The foyer and lobby light fixtures were fashioned into comets. The auditorium walls have a three-dimensional appearance, with stars and planets sprinkled about the deep night sky.

Star-shaped chandeliers graced either side of the auditorium, with double comet trails arching stylishly from either side. The Schine Theater Chain dissolved in 1965, and a succession of owners allowed this historic treasure to deteriorate. By 1992, the building stood vacant and vulnerable.

A comprehensive downtown study concluded that the theater could be a viable and valuable resource for the Auburn community. In February 1998, the Cayuga County Arts Council purchased the building and FAST (Friends of Auburn Schine Theater) was formed as a subcommittee to guide the restoration project to completion.

The master plan will preserve the whimsical design and decor created by Ebersson in 1938. The balcony will



Exterior view of the Cayuga Museum.

remain intact, a flat floor will accommodate weddings, receptions, trade shows and dances. Retractable seating will provide the "raked" pitch needed for film and stage presentations. Diversity of programming will ensure a profitable future for the Auburn Schine Theater, allowing everyone in the community to enjoy a wide variety of events. Plays, concerts, family events, film festivals; the possibilities for the Auburn Schine Theater are endless.

- *Location:* 12-14 South Street, Auburn
- *Telephone:* 315- 252-2787
- *Website:* <http://www.cayuganet.org/arts/schine/index.html>
- *Email:* mrschine@hotmail.com

The building has limited access at this time, due to construction in progress. Tours can be arranged for groups or individuals by calling the Cayuga County Arts Council Office at 315-252-2787.

THE HARRIET TUBMAN HOME

Harriet Tubman was born a slave in 1820 near Cambridge on the eastern shore of Maryland. Once her own escape from slavery was behind her, through the use of the "Underground Railroad" Harriet made nineteen trips south, rescuing more than three-hundred slaves. Her flexible but effective method of leading slaves out of the South depended on an ever-shifting series of hiding places. The secrets of the Underground Railroad were so well kept that, even today, not much is known about it.

During the Civil War, Harriet rendered invaluable service to the Union Army as a spy, scout and hospital nurse. After the war, William Seward encouraged Harriet to settle in Auburn, where she started a home for aged blacks. Today, as a meeting place for youth conferences and a cultural enrichment center, the Harriet

Tubman Home proudly fulfills Harriet's dream by servicing all of her people. The Tubman Home was included on

"I has reasoned this out in my mind... there was one of two things I had a right to- liberty or death."

- Harriet Tubman

the "Save America's Treasures Tour" and visited by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton in 1998, and again, with the President, in the summer of 1999. Many federal, state and local grants have been secured since 1999. The Tubman Home is currently undergoing a federal feasibility study to assess its addition into the National Park Service.

Harriet Tubman Home has been a registered National Historic Landmark since 1975.

- *Location:* 180 South Street, Auburn
- *Telephone:* 315-252-2081
- *Website:* www.HarrietTubmanHome.org
- *Email:* hthome@localnet.com

- *Regular Hours:*
Tuesday - Friday 10AM - 4PM
Saturday 10AM - 3PM
- *Winter Hours:*
November - January by appointment

Group tours are available by appointment. The Library/Orientation Room is handicapped accessible. ♿

Jessica Kline is the communications specialist at the Cayuga County Office of Tourism.

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("FLPAC" continued from page 15)

through the backstage area. The crew, now approaching 16 hours on the job, generally could not care less. But tonight is different. As he passes, one by one the crew applauds the King.

There is an interesting dynamic between the talent and the crew. Like dogs and cats that have lived together for a while, they regard each other with genuine indifference. From the artist's point of view, the crew is a parade of strange faces changing from night to night, city to city. Many artists insist that only familiar faces be in the wings when they come offstage. It is understandable, but it can lead to dissension with the local crew who view the real estate around the stage as their own. The Black Crowes cautioned stagehands not to look in their direction. As homely as they are, the crew was happy to oblige.

11:15 pm

The work of tearing down the show begins. Feverishly. The main difference between the *in* and the *out* is the pace. As soon as the lights come up, the myopic pursuit of everyone in the building is to tear things down as quickly as possible to get home. Do it safely, do it well - but do it quick.

As a result of this monomania, equipment comes down at alarming speed. It is choreographed chaos and it is during this chaos that an accomplished, professional road crew can make all the difference. If they know what they are doing, they can tear down a huge show in an amazingly short time. At some of the bigger venues in Rochester, shows such as Reba McEntire or Van Halen, which have traveled with as many as 16 trucks, can leave the building in under four hours.

Throughout the night, loaders stack and flip to return each case to

its original position in the truck. One by one, they fill up and leave the docks to be replaced by another.

12:45 am

With the deck clear of equipment, the lights and speakers are lowered toward the stage. Once everything is out of the air, it's a moral victory for the crew.

2:05 am

The crew breaks apart the last of the lighting trusses and stacks the pieces for the trucks. The day that began with the riggers hanging chains ends with them lowering them to the stage.

2:42 am

The final case comes to rest atop a stack at the back of the fourth truck, and the last of the convoy that arrived almost 24 hours ago leaves the Finger Lakes campus in its rear view mirror.

The tired crew lines up at the steward's desk to receive thanks and their T-shirt. Somewhere in the lost history of rock and roll, the tradition evolved of giving a T-shirt to each member of the local crew. The good ones state the artist's name and the words Local Crew. The bad are not so understated. Most of those are used to wash the car. Over the years, the shirts make for an interesting timeline of a stagehand's career.

The hands filter out and make their way to their cars. The steward turns out the lights, bringing to a close a very long but typical day in the life... The doors to the stage swing shut, leaving the walls of FLPAC to start talking about another night of magic on its stage.

Duane and Linda Bombard live near Gorham, New York. They have two children, two sheep, two goats, two dogs and four cats